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ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
March 20, 2007

Questions & Answers
(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of a survey conducted in February.)

Q: Do you support the Abe cabinet?

Yes	43.8	(45.3)
No	43.9	(42.7)
Other answers (O/A)	4.4	(3.0)

No answer (N/A) 7.9 (9.0)

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the foregoing question)
Give up to two reasons for your approval of the Abe cabinet.

I can appreciate its political stance	27.4
It's stable	9.2
The prime minister is trustworthy	27.6
There's a fresh image of the prime minister	43.4
I can appreciate its economic policy	4.3
I can appreciate its foreign policy	15.1
Because it's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito	10.2
It's better than its predecessors	10.4
O/A+N/A	3.9

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the foregoing question) Give up to two reasons for your disapproval of the Abe cabinet.

I can't appreciate its political stance	44.4
It's unstable	32.0
The prime minister is untrustworthy	27.3
The prime minister lacks political experience	16.6
I can't appreciate its economic policy	19.3
I can't appreciate its foreign policy	10.7
Because it's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito	8.6
It's worse than its predecessors	10.7
O/A+N/A	3.9

Q: Which political party do you support now? Pick only one.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	36.4	(34.2)
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Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	11.3	(12.0)
New Komeito (NK)	2.1	(3.9)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	1.8	(1.4)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	0.7	(1.0)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0.1	(0.3)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0.1	(0.1)
Other political parties	---	(---)
None	46.0	46.8
N/A	1.5	(0.5)

Q: The rate of public support for the Abe cabinet has been declining over the past six months. Why do you think this is? Pick as many reasons as you like from among those listed below, if any.

The prime minister has failed to display leadership in his cabinet or toward his party

43.7
The prime minister has not set forth any appropriate policy

21.0
The prime minister has not fully accounted to the public for his policy, etc.

32.2
The prime minister had postal rebels reinstated in the LDP

31.6
The prime minister is negative about reform

15.2
The prime minister has made no remarkable achievements

33.9
There are scandals and gaffes involving his cabinet ministers

60.1

O/A

1.7

Nothing in particular

3.5

N/A

1.5

Q: Because of scandals and gaffes involving cabinet ministers, there are calls from within the LDP for shuffling the cabinet before this summer's election for the House of Councillors. Do you think it would be better for Prime Minister Abe to shuffle his cabinet before the upper house election?

Yes	30.3
Yes to a certain degree	22.9
No to a certain degree	16.3
No	21.9
N/A	8.6

Polling methodology

Date of survey: March 17-18.

Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random sampling basis).

Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.

Number of valid respondents: 1,741 persons (58.0%).

(2) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)

March 19, 2007

Questions & Answers

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(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote findings from the last survey conducted in February.)

Q: Do you support the Abe cabinet?

Yes	43	(49)
No	45	(41)
Can't say (C/S) + don't know (D/K)	12	(10)

Q: Which political party do you support or like now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	41	(44)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	18	(21)
New Komeito (NK)	4	(3)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	5	(3)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	2	(3)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0	(0)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0	(0)
Other political parties	1	(1)
None	25	(21)
C/S+D/K	4	(4)

Q: Do you appreciate the Abe cabinet's job performance?

Yes	29	(34)
No	56	(52)
Can't say which	8	(6)
C/S+D/K	7	(8)

Q: What do you think about the Abe cabinet's reform stance compared with the Koizumi cabinet's?

Positive	3	(3)
Negative	50	(50)
Not very different	38	(37)
C/S+D/K	9	(10)

(Note) The total percentage does not become 100% in some cases due to rounding.

Polling methodology: The survey was taken March 16-18 by Nikkei Research Inc. over the telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,568 households with one or more voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 901 persons (57.5%).

(3) 6 months of Abe administration -- Loneliness and agony: Torn between Kono statement and US House resolution; LDP will launch a reinvestigation into coercion mentioned in Kono statement, and government will cooperate as necessary

Fumito Ishibashi

On the evening of March 8, shock waves passed through junior and mainstay lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who sympathize with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's thoughts and convictions.

The reason was that when asked by reporters what he would do about

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the statement released in 1993 by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono (Kono Statement) acknowledging that government authorities' involvement in recruiting women for sexual servitude, Abe told them: "We basically stand by the statement. Our party will launch a reinvestigation about coercion. We on the part of the government will cooperate with the party as necessary."

Two hours before this comment came out, Nariaki Nakayama, who chairs the Parliamentary Council to Consider the Future of Japan and History Education, a group of lawmakers from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and some group members called on Abe at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) and called on the government to conduct a reexamination of the data, which had formed the grounds for the Kono Statement. Should the government decide to reinvestigate the data, it would supposedly be confirmed that there are no data that show the military or government authorities had forced women to serve as prostitutes in military brothels. Reviewing the Kono Statement then seemed inevitable.

At the time, Abe expressed his gratitude to Nakayama and the others and indicated his willingness to launch a reinvestigation. But afterwards, he declared that the reinvestigation would be conducted not by the government but by the LDP. This half-baked policy switch perplexed the parliamentary council members. Abe's implication was that the government would stand back from the frontline of debate on the problem of whether to review the Kono Statement. One member said angrily: "I felt as if the ladder were taken away from under me." Another quipped, "Who in the world put him up to that?"

To avoid confrontation

Abe and Shoichi Nakagawa, currently the chairman of the LDP Policy Research Council, together created the parliamentary council in 1997 when they discovered descriptions of the comfort women situation were being included in all history textbooks for junior high school students. The question of whether to review the Kono Statement is indeed a major subject that affects Abe's very *raison d'etre*.

Nonetheless, Abe declared at the Lower House plenary session last Oct. 3 that he stood by the Kono Statement. This declaration was viewed as a significant political compromise, even though in his reply before a Lower House Budget Committee session last Oct. 5 Abe denied the existence of "coercion in the narrow sense," which means the direct involvement of the Imperial Japanese Army in the "comfort women" issue. Although Abe felt ashamed (of his announcement that he stood by the Kono statement), if he had declared he indeed would review the Kono statement, he would have certainly become an easy target of criticism for the anti-Abe group in the LDP, starting with former LDP Secretary General Koichi Kato, as well as the opposition parties, given the political climate at the time.

Why did Abe stop short of deciding to launch a reinvestigation with the government's initiative?

One primary reason was his concern about what would happen to the US House resolution condemning Japan on the comfort-women issue. This resolution concludes the comfort women issue as "one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century." It was initially hardly noticed in the United States, however.

But Japan's backlash against the resolution fueled outrage in the US media. The March 6 edition of The New York Times in its editorial criticized Japan sharply: "What part of 'Japanese Army sex slaves'"

does Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, have so much trouble understanding and apologizing for?" Following it, other major dailies also gave wide space to articles criticizing Abe one after the other.

As of March 8, Abe was being informed through diplomatic channels that the resolution would inevitably clear the House. Abe was forced to conclude that if the government had declared it would conduct a reinvestigation at this point, that would simply add fuel to the flames of criticism.

The planned visit to Japan by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in mid-April and Abe's own visit to the US set for late April also shackled him. But what Abe feared more than that was the possibility that a deep-seated anti-US sentiment found among Japan's conservatives might ignite and come to the surface.

If the resolution were to be approved by the House, voices condemning US troops for their raping of women during the days of the occupation of Japan by the General Headquarters of the Allied Powers (GHQ) would inevitably arise. Voices charging the US with its air raid on Tokyo and its dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki would also arise. Such being the case, the US Republicans would not remain mum. Who and which country would chuckle with glee at the emergence of such a dispute between Japanese and American conservatives?

At noon of March 9, Abe invited two-term lawmakers of his party to a luncheon at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei). During the lunch, Yasuhide Nakayama, who led the process of compiling suggestions (for the review of the Kono statement), complained: "All of us have felt chagrined at the current development." Abe, however, went no further than to say, wearing a stern look: "I'd like you to fully discuss the matter with Mr. Shoichi Nakagawa. I also will tell him to do so."

Japan's inability to rebut

A similar resolution denouncing Japan was introduced five times in the US House of Representatives in the past, but every time, the resolution was killed. But "there seems to be some difference between this time and the past cases," Eriko Yamatani, the special advisor to the Prime Minister (for education), said. She was quick to notice the difference.

Last September, soon after assuming her post, Yamatani suggested to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki: "Taking no action would lead to fatal consequences." But Shiozaki was slow to act. It was not until December when Abe, realizing the seriousness of the situation, told Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi and others: "You must rebut thoroughly each time there is criticism of Japan if it is not based on facts."

On Feb. 15, however, the US House's subcommittee held a hearing for former "comfort women." Irritated by this development, Abe sent Special Advisor to the Prime Minister (for Public Relations) Hiroshige Seko to the US.

"Lying behind the resolution are Chinese lobbyists. Their aim is to drive a wedge between Japan and the US," said Seko, desperately appealing to a division director-level official at the US State Department who had responded to Seko. Swayed by Seko's strong appeal, the official went to (Christopher) Hill, assistant secretary

of state. Hill later told Seko: "I didn't realize there was such a background to the story." Hill appeared very much disturbed. Because the matter concerns human rights, conservatives in the US cannot extend a helping hand so easily to Japan. It was too late.

Japanese Ambassador to the US Ryozi Kato issued a statement to the US Congress, in which he asserted: "The Japanese government clearly

admitted it was responsible for the comfort women issue and offered a formal apology in the name of a top-level government official." But Japanese Embassy officials have shown no trace of having given a detailed explanation to the US government or the US Congress. Nor have they made a rebuttal. Why? The reason is the existence of the Kono statement. "As long as the government stands by that statement, we can't make any rebuttal," a ranking government official said. The Kono statement is not only used as the grounds for the resolution but also is the reason why the Japanese government cannot rebut.

Self-remonstrance?

Yohei Kono currently serves as speaker of the Lower House. This fact also makes the government reluctant to review the Kono statement. Minutes before the vote was taken on the fiscal 2007 budget in the Lower House on March 3, there was even the rumor flying around that "If the move calling for the review of the Kono Statement gains more momentum, Kono might refrain from ringing the bell to open the Lower House plenary session." On March 15, Kono expressed displeasure at the emerging move to seek the review of the statement, noting, "I released the statement based on my convictions. I hope to see it taken as is." Many in the government and the LDP are also negative about reviewing the statement. One official commented, "Why do they bother to make waves?"

While faced with a tough situation, Abe attended the Defense Academy's graduation ceremony held in Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Prefecture, on March 18. He there quoted a passage of former British Prime Minister Churchill's Memoirs: "How can advice seeking caution and self-restraint become a major cause for fatal danger? We will realize how a middle-of-the road policy adopted in pursuit of a safe and calm life is associated with the center of disaster."

Abe then continued: "In an emergency, I don't think it is not an appropriate conclusion to add the two together and divide the sum by two. It is necessary to make an accurate analysis of the situation and make a correct decision in accordance with own convictions." These remarks should be rather taken as admonishing himself.

(4) Editorial: Make aid to Africa a model for economic independence

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
March 22, 2007

In the Asia-Africa Conference and the G8 Gleneagles Summit in 2005, then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi pledged that Japan would double its official development assistance (ODA) to Africa. The aid-to-Africa project has now gone into full swing. Tokyo signed an agreement on yen loans to the African Development Bank in February and it also inked in March accords on yen loans for infrastructure construction and for poverty reduction to Tanzania and Mozambique. Tanzania is the second country that has received debt relief, following Senegal in 2005.

Japan increased aid to Africa until the middle of the 1990s, when it financed ODA budgets separately from other accounts. Japan has

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hosted the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which aims to assist Africa's economic self-support. The 4th round of TICAD will be held in 2008.

Since the economic situation of sub-Saharan Africa has worsened, many countries in this area became subject to debt relief. Therefore, the number of countries subject to yen loans was limited to Tunisia, Morocco, Kenya and a few other countries. Because of a cut in ODA budget, grant aid and technical aid were also reduced.

The Millennium Development Goals were adopted at the United Nations in 2000. The World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. Aid to Africa where the poverty has become serious was a main discuss issue in the Johannesburg Summit.

Infrastructure development in the Asian region has been the pillar of Japan's ODA. It is true that Japan's ODA has contributed to the

region's economic growth, although it was often criticized. However, Japan cannot provide the same kind of ODA to Africa, countries in which are at different stages of economic development, as it did to Asian countries. Japan needs to come up with measures that can be applied to African nations.

As part of the government's effort to reform ODA programs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will implement all aid programs -- repayable aid of loans, grant aid, and technical assistance -- from October 2008. The new system is suited for offering aid to Africa where measures for poverty reduction, development of human resources, social-infrastructure development, and the building of economic foundations have to be implemented simultaneously. Fortunately there are many JICA bases in Africa. This could be a good chance for JICA to test its policy of placing priority on requests from aid recipients.

Japan should provide not only ODA programs such as building roads and power, and laying electric power cables that are indispensable for economic independence, but also sustainable projects. The right way of offering aid is to create bases for economic independence through aid projects in the agriculture area, modernization of smaller businesses, and promotion of local industries that will produce extensive ripple effects in the economy.

Although Japan was the largest aid donor in the world in the 1990s, it will become the fifth largest donor in 2010, losing the lead to Britain and Germany, according to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee's forecast. Unless Japan's financial condition turns better, there is no hope that Japan will be able to boost its ODA budget. Therefore, Japan should provide quality ODA programs so that that its aid will receive recognition.

Former colonial powers have led in providing aid to Africa, but their aid programs have not been successful. It is said that their assistance has reached its limits. Therefore, Japan will be able to show its presence by extending aid projects that help Africa become economically independent.

SCHIEFFER